



## **CHALLENGE INCARCERATION PROGRAM**

### **I. Mission**

The mission of the Challenge Incarceration Program is to provide inmates the opportunity to gain the personal resources needed to return to the community, to successfully complete parole/extended supervision, and to remain crime and chemical free.

This is accomplished in an environment that affords for the security and safety of staff, inmates, and the community, as well as allowing inmates the opportunity to make needed changes in their lives. These changes will be effectuated through participation in physical exercise, military drill and ceremony, manual labor, personal development counseling, substance abuse programming, education, group interaction and release preparation. The Challenge Incarceration Program also provides an additional alternative to revocation option for the Division of Community Corrections.

The mission is to be achieved while maintaining a recidivism rate equal to or better than similar inmate populations released through other release mechanisms.

### **II. History**

The Challenge Incarceration Program was created by the Wisconsin State Legislature through enactment of State Statute 302.045; which originally stated, “The department shall provide a challenge incarceration program for inmates selected to participate. The program shall provide participants with strenuous physical exercise, manual labor, personal development counseling, substance abuse treatment and education, military drill and ceremony and counseling in preparation for release on parole or extended supervision.”

The program began in January 1991 with 20 male beds and was located at the St. Croix Correctional Center in New Richmond, Wisconsin. St. Croix’s program expanded to accommodate 38 male beds in November 1991. The capacity increased by 28 beds in 1995 through the addition of the Atlas Program. The Atlas Program was designed as a 90-day program for Alternative to Revocation (ATR) offenders from the Division of Community Corrections. St. Croix’s bed capacity expanded again in the fall of 1996 to a capacity of 120 male beds. The center continues to operate at that capacity for male inmates today. The Atlas program was discontinued in 2003, so that ATR offenders could be offered a minimum of 180 days in programming. In February 2003, the center expanded its operations to include a 12 bed female program in the Athena building. In January 2004, a second correctional center, Black River Correctional Center, located in Black River Falls, was converted to a Challenge Incarceration Program facility with 100 male beds.

Effective October 1, 2009, Wisconsin Act 28 expanded the criteria for earned release programs to allow more inmates to be eligible for early release from confinement, if they complete a rehabilitation program, and made the Challenge Incarceration Program available to inmates without substance abuse treatment needs. Based on this new statutory language, the Challenge Incarceration Program at St. Croix Correctional Center expanded to include a program for inmates without an identified substance abuse need. This program was discontinued on June 09, 2011, with the elimination of Act 28.

### **III. Overview**

The Challenge Incarceration Program is voluntary; however, all program elements are mandatory. Challenge Incarceration Program participants waive Department of Corrections Administrative Rules governing procedural matters for general population inmates, so that behaviors and consequences can be dealt with in a manner consistent with the mission of the program.

The program is designed for the inmates to complete all program components in a minimum of 180 days. Program components are structured around discipline and rehabilitative programming. Inmates are given an opportunity to develop life skills needed for the successful return to the community and to remain crime and chemical free. The program includes rigorous physical activity; manual work assignments; regimentation and discipline; instruction on military bearing; intensive AODA treatment; individualized educational programming; and in depth group interaction addressing rational thinking and responsible behavior.

Upon successful completion of the program, the inmate is granted parole for New Law convictions and extended supervision for Truth-in-Sentencing convictions. The inmate must further be involved in a high-risk supervision program after release. All Challenge Incarceration Program graduates who are released on parole shall have aftercare components as part of their case planning, to the extent possible, based on community availability of treatment.

### **IV. Admission Criteria**

The Wisconsin Legislature, Department of Corrections administrators, St. Croix Correctional Center and Black River Correctional Center has established criteria to determine the appropriateness for participation. Enrollment is subject to the following criteria:

- A. Inmates must volunteer and sign the Memo of Agreement.
- B. Inmates sentenced on or after July 26, 2003 must be under the age of 40 on the date of admission. Inmates sentenced prior to July 26, 2003 must be under the age of 30 on the date of admission.
- C. Inmates must have an identified substance abuse treatment need.
- D. Inmates must not have any physical limitations. They must be medically approved for “any activity” and capable of performing strenuous work and rigorous exercise. Inmates with asthma are not eligible.
- E. Inmates cannot be currently convicted of crimes against life or bodily security (940, Wisconsin Statutes), crimes involving physical or sexual assault to a child (948.02, 948.025, 948.03, 948.05, 948.055, 948.06, 948.07, 948.075, 948.08, or 948.095, Wisconsin Statutes)
- F. Offense and Convictions before 12/31/1999 (New Law) convictions – only – Inmates convicted of armed or assaultive offenses will be screened on a case-by-case basis.

TIS convictions – only – Inmates must be deemed eligible for participation by the sentencing judge. If the inmate meets all other requirements, he/she will be allowed to participate when

the Bureau of Offender Classification and Movement deems them appropriate for placement in a minimum-security facility.

Both New Law and Truth in Sentencing convictions – Inmates must meet the criteria established for both New Law and TIS convictions.

- G. Inmates must not have any psychological limitations that would preclude participation in a confrontational-style program. Inmates may not currently be on any psychotropic medication. Those previously on such medication must be off the medication for a minimum of three months and must receive clearance from Psychological Services staff.

Inmates in need of sex offender treatment, regardless of conviction, are not appropriate for participation.

- H. Inmates with significant dental needs should have these needs resolved prior to admission to the Challenge Incarceration Program.
- I. The Bureau of Offender Classification and Movement staff, through a Reclassification Hearing conducted at an inmate's current institution, will review inmates who have been found appropriate for the Challenge Incarceration Program. Inmates must be deemed appropriate for placement in a minimum security facility. Temporary placement for male inmates will be at Jackson Correctional Institution or Stanley Correctional Institution. Temporary placement for female inmates will be at John Burke Correctional Center. The Bureau of Offender Classification and Movement approve inmates for participation in the Challenge Incarceration Program. Once the Bureau of Offender Classification and Movement has approved an inmate, the inmate's name is added to the Challenge Incarceration Program Pending Transfer List. This list is a waiting list for both St. Croix and Black River Correctional Centers. Inmates are transferred to the Challenge Incarceration Program on a seniority basis with those who have been on the list the longest being transferred first.
- J. Inmates who have poor institution adjustment will need to demonstrate appropriate behavior prior to approval for participation in the Challenge Incarceration Program. The Program Review Committee and the Bureau of Offender Classification and Movement will determine when adjustment is appropriate for participation in the Challenge Incarceration Program.

## V. GOALS

- A. Provision of a safe and secure correctional environment for the public, staff and inmates;
- B. Provision of productive inmate programs and work activities that allow inmates the opportunity to gain the resources needed to remain crime and drug free upon release;
- C. Maintenance of a positive correctional institution living and working environment for public, staff, and inmates;
- D. Management of human and fiscal resources allocated to St. Croix and Black River Correctional Centers;

- E. Maintenance of a positive impact on overcrowding that exists in Wisconsin's adult correctional institutions;
- F. Maintenance of recidivism rate equal to or better than similar inmate populations released through other prison release mechanisms.

## **VI. Core Principles**

The following statements are the fundamental program principles, which will govern the operation of the Challenge Incarceration Program. The statements are meant to apply equally to staff and inmates.

- Every individual is entitled to be treated with respect and dignity.
- Every individual is responsible for his or her thoughts, feelings and actions.
- Every individual is capable of positive change.
- Every individual needs to identify with a positive reinforcing group.
- Every individual makes good and poor choices.
- Positive change occurs in an environment that promotes honesty and risk taking.
- Role modeling, self-discipline, and self-respect are all components of positive change and responsible behavior.

*The fundamental components and concepts of the Challenge Incarceration Program are reinforced throughout all program activities and by all staff.*

## **VII. Program Activity**

Program activity is focused in the following areas:

- A. **Military Bearing:** This includes intensive instruction in military bearing, courtesy, drills and physical exercise. The inmates are oriented to this activity by Drill Instructors; however, all staff reinforce concepts that support military bearing.
- B. **Group:** Both individual and group counseling approaches are an integral part of the program. Group/individual counseling focuses on criminal thinking and rational behavior therapy. At the end of each day, all inmates are required to complete a structured entry in their journals. The social workers are the primary case planners; however, treatment activities are facilitated by both treatment and security staff. Inmates who have completed the majority of their treatment needs and are in their final phase of the Challenge Incarceration Program are utilized in the peer treatment groups established for inmates in the early phases of the Challenge Incarceration Program.

(An added element of the treatment process is that each inmate and the inmates collectively in their squad set individual and group goals to be accomplished while in the Challenge Incarceration Program. The movement towards these individual and group goals will be monitored by treatment and security staff.)

- C. **Education:** A structured education program is part of every inmate's program. Emphasis is on ABE and HSED skill development. Those inmates who are already at or above these levels have individualized educational programs. The education planning is done by the education staff, with supportive services provided by program and security staff. Each squad

is held back two and a half days each week for educational and group counseling. There is also time set aside on the weekend for study time.

- D. **Alcohol or Drug Addiction (AODA):** AODA programming will be provided for inmates with an identified chemical or alcohol program need. A chemical abuse assessment is completed. Programming is abstinence based and provided by contracted certified AODA staff. Additional one-to-one and assignment work is completed outside of the group setting.
- E. **Work:** Every inmate involved in the Challenge Incarceration Program must also be involved in meaningful work on a daily basis. This work is coordinated by a supervisor and supervised by a correctional sergeant. It is important for inmates to accept their role as a working member of a community. Such work also enhances their sense of self-worth, group identity, and provides an opportunity to “pay back” the community in some limited fashion, for the expenses the community has incurred for their past criminal behavior. Work tasks include manual unskilled labor for non-profit organizations.
- F. **Evaluation:** Inmates are closely supervised and rated daily by both security and program staff. Standardized evaluation forms are used to assess the inmate’s overall progress. The results of the evaluations are tabulated on a weekly basis so patterns of behavior can be monitored. Additionally, regular staff meetings and individual interviews are conducted to review the inmate’s progress in meeting program goals.

Disciplinary violations, general negative behavioral trends, or refusal to cooperate to the inmate’s fullest capabilities in the Challenge Incarceration Program may result in the termination of a participant’s enrollment. Prior to the end of the 180-day program, a staffing committee makes a recommendation as to the appropriateness of release. Each inmate successfully completing the program will receive a certification of completion and participates in a formal graduation ceremony.

- G. **Level System:** All inmates entering the Challenge Incarceration Program will move through a level or step system. The level system will be composed of the following stages:
  - Orientation - Weeks 1 –2
  - Phase I - Weeks 3-10
  - Phase II - Weeks 11-20
  - Phase III - Weeks 21-26
  - Phase IV - Graduates pending release

Specific activities are designed for each phase. Failure to complete a phase may result in removal from Challenge Incarceration Program. As inmates move through the phases, performance expectations placed on them are increased in terms of their military bearing/drill expertise, education/AODA/treatment goals, and their ability to be leaders for earlier phase inmates. An inmate’s phase status is identified by specific clothing characteristics.

- H. **Squad Basics:** Inmates will be admitted in groups called squads. Inmates remain with their squad for all Challenge Incarceration Program activities: treatment, education, recreation, etc. The squad becomes the basis for the inmates’ reference group. It is within this setting that the positive peer activities take place.

- I. **Treatment Teams:** One treatment team will be assigned two inmate squads. Each treatment team will consist of a supervisor, teacher, alcohol/drug counselor, social worker and security staff. Teams will develop individual inmate case plans. Additionally, regular team meetings and individual interviews are conducted to review the inmate's progress in meeting program goals.
- J. **Psychological Services:** Psychological services are available at the Challenge Incarceration Program on a limited basis. Any staff member can refer an inmate for Psychological Services. All referrals are coordinated through the social worker. The reports of the clinician are considered in staffing decisions.
- K. **Medical:** Significant medical needs are met on an as needed basis. Sick call is held five times a week. The Challenge Incarceration Program is a non-smoking program.
- L. **Release Planning:** All inmates are involved with their release plans from the onset of the program. Upon release, probation and parole agents conduct sessions to orient the inmate to release obligations and expectations. Upon release, each inmate will be subject to high-risk supervision for a minimum of six months. Probation and parole agents provide critical transitional services between the Challenge Incarceration Program and the Division Community Corrections supervision.

### **VIII. Location and Facility Information:**

St. Croix Correctional Center is located in New Richmond, a small rural community in northwestern Wisconsin. The center transitioned to a Challenge Incarceration Program center in January 1991. The physical plant includes a 40,000 square foot metal fabricated structure, completed in 1994, which houses the center's administrative and staff offices, inmate barracks, food service, combined dining hall/gymnasium, laundry, and general support facilities. The center's original modular structure, built in 1978 and expanded in 1985, is used for educational programs and housing. Another separate modular structure, built in 2003, provides the center's female population housing.

The Black River Correctional Center is located 11 miles east of Black River Falls and is situated in the midst of the Jackson County Forest, as well as land owned by the Department of Natural Resources. The center originally opened in 1962 and was first used as a facility for troubled male juveniles. In the 1970's, Black River Correctional Center was converted to an adult male center for inmates aged 17 to 24. The center transitioned to a Challenge Incarceration Program facility in January 2004. The center consists of administrative and staff offices, inmate rooms and an inmate dormitory, food service, dining hall, laundry, gymnasium and general support facilities.